

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. An electronic data search system for presenting an
2 information browsing person with information having links to
3 electronic data satisfying a search condition received from said
4 information browsing person, comprising: a search center and at
5 least one authorization center, wherein:
- 6 said search center comprises:
- 7 a search database in which an address of electronic data
8 opened to the public by an information disclosing person is
9 registered, being associated with a search condition of said
10 electronic data;
- 11 a search request receiving means for receiving a search
12 request, which includes a search condition, from a terminal of an
13 information browsing person;
- 14 a search means for searching for an address of electronic data
15 that is registered in said search database being associated with a
16 search condition included in a search request received by said search
17 request receiving means from a terminal of an information browsing
18 person, and for presenting the terminal of said information browsing
19 person with information having a link to the electronic data of the
20 detected address; and
- 21 said at least one authorization center comprises an
22 authorization registration means for registering an address of
23 electronic data opened to the public by an information disclosing
24 person who satisfies predetermined authorization conditions, in an

25 authorization database;

26 wherein:

27 when a search request, which is received by said search
28 request receiving means from a terminal of an information browsing
29 person, includes not only a search condition but also a condition that
30 authorization by a certain authorization center is given,

31 then, said search means searches for addresses of electronic
32 data that are registered in said search database being associated with
33 said search condition, and, registered in the authorization database
34 of said authorization center, and

35 said search means presents information having links to the
36 electronic data at the detected addresses, to the terminal of said
37 information browsing person.

1 2. A electronic data search system according to Claim 1,
2 wherein:

3 said authorization center further comprises a
4 cancelled-authorization registration means for registering an address
5 of electronic data deleted from said authorization database, in a
6 cancelled-authorization database;

7 said search center further comprises a cache means that
8 periodically accesses said authorization database of each
9 authorization center, obtains contents of said authorization database
10 of each authorization center, and hold the obtained contents in a
11 storage device provided to the cache means itself; and

12 when a search request received by said search request
13 receiving means from a terminal of an information browsing person
14 includes not only a search condition but also a condition that

15 authorization by a certain authorization center is given, then, said
 16 search means searches for address of electronic data that are
 17 registered in said search database being associated with said search
 18 condition, and, registered in said authorization center's
 19 authorization database held in said storage device by said cache
 20 means, and further, not registered in the cancelled-authorization
 21 database of said authorization center; and

22 then, said search means presents information having links to
 23 the electronic data at the detected addresses, to the terminal of said
 24 information browsing person.

1 3. A electronic data search system according to Claim 1,
 2 wherein:

3 said search request receiving means displays a search screen
 4 on a display device provided to a terminal of an information
 5 browsing person who has accessed said search center, with said
 6 search screen being for receiving designation of a search condition
 7 for electronic data and designation of necessity of authorization by
 8 each of said at least one authorization center; and

9 said search request receiving means receives a search request
 10 from the information browsing person through said search screen.

1 4. A electronic data search system according to Claim 1,
 2 wherein:

3 said authorization center further comprises:

4 a mark issuing means for issuing an authorization mark
 5 having a link to said authorization center itself, to an information
 6 disclosing person who opens electronic data of which an address is

7 registered in said authorization database through said authorization
8 registration means, and for permitting display of said authorization
9 mark on said electronic data;

10 a verification request receiving means for receiving a
11 verification request that includes an address of electronic data, from
12 a terminal of an information browsing person; and

13 a verification means for verifying that an address of
14 electronic data, which is included in a verification request received
15 by said verification request receiving means from a terminal of an
16 information browsing person, is registered in said authorization
17 database, and for presenting a result of verification to the terminal
18 of said information browsing person; and

19 in response to an information browsing person's operation of
20 selecting an authorization mark displayed together with browsed
21 electronic data, a terminal of said information browsing person
22 transmits an authorization request that includes an address of said
23 electronic data, to an authorization center linked to said
24 authorization mark.

1 5. A electronic data search system according to Claim 1,
2 wherein:

3 said authorization center further comprises a mark issuing
4 means for issuing an information disclosing person, who opens
5 electronic data of which an address is registered in said
6 authorization database by said authorization registration means,
7 with an authorization mark embedded with an electronic watermark
8 of signature information for said electronic data or for information
9 relevant to said electronic data, and for permitting display of said

10 authorization mark on said electronic data; and
11 in response to an information browsing person's operation of
12 selecting an authorization mark displayed together with browsed
13 electronic data, a terminal of said information browsing person
14 extracts signature information embedded as electronic watermark
15 information in said authorization mark, and uses the extracted
16 signature information to verify said electronic data.

1 6. A electronic data search system according to Claim 1,
2 wherein:
3 said electronic data is Web data; and
4 said address is a URL.

1 7. A search apparatus for presenting an information browsing
2 person with information having links to electronic data that satisfy a
3 search condition received from said information browsing person,
4 comprising:

5 a search database in which an address of electronic data
6 opened to the public by an information disclosing person is
7 registered, being associated with a search condition of said
8 electronic data;

9 a search request receiving means for receiving a search
10 request, which includes a search condition, from a terminal of an
11 information browsing person;

12 a search means for searching for an address of electronic data
13 that is registered in said search database being associated with a
14 search condition included in a search request received by said search
15 request receiving means from a terminal of an information browsing

16 person, and for presenting the terminal of said information browsing
17 person with information having a link to the electronic data of the
18 detected address; and

19 an access means for accessing an authorization center that
20 has an authorization database in which an address of electronic data
21 opened to the public by an information disclosing person satisfying
22 predetermined conditions is registered; wherein,

23 when a search request, which is received by said search
24 request receiving means from a terminal of an information browsing
25 person, includes not only a search condition but also a condition that
26 authorization by an authorization center is given,

27 then, said search means searches for addresses of electronic
28 data that are registered in said search database being associated with
29 said search condition, and, registered in the authorization database
30 of said authorization center, and

31 said search means presents information having links to the
32 electronic data at the detected addresses, to the terminal of said
33 information browsing person.

1 8. A registration apparatus for registering information
2 disclosing persons who satisfy predetermined authorization
3 conditions, comprising:

4 an authorization database;

5 an authorization registration means for registering an
6 address of electronic data opened to the public by an information
7 disclosing person who satisfies predetermined authorization
8 conditions, into said authorization database; and

9 an access control means for permitting access to said

10 authorization database by the search apparatus of Claim 7.

1 9. A method of searching for electronic data, in which an
2 electronic data search apparatus is used to search for addresses of
3 electronic data that satisfy a search condition received from an
4 information browsing person, and information having links to the
5 electronic data at the detected addresses is presented to said
6 information browsing person, comprising:

7 a receiving step, in which a search request including a search
8 condition is received from a terminal of an information browsing
9 person; and

10 a search step, in which a search database, which registers
11 addresses of electronic data opened to the public by information
12 disclosing persons, associating said addresses with respective search
13 conditions of said electronic data, is searched for electronic data's
14 addresses associated with said search condition included in said
15 search request received from the terminal of the information
16 browsing person in said receiving step, and information having links
17 to electronic data at the detected addresses is presented to the
18 terminal of said information browsing person;

19 wherein,

20 said search apparatus is connected through a network to an
21 authorization center that registers addresses of electronic data
22 opened to the public by information disclosing persons satisfying
23 predetermined authorization conditions, in an authorization
24 database; and

25 in said search step, when the search request, which is
26 received from the terminal of the information browsing person in

27 said receiving step, includes not only the search condition but also a
28 condition that authorization by the authorization center is given,
29 then, electronic data's addresses that are registered in said search
30 database being associated with said search condition, and, registered
31 in the authorization database of said authorization center are
32 searched for, and information having links to electronic data at the
33 detected addresses is presented to the terminal of said information
34 browsing person.